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ADDRESS

OF

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THE DIPLOMA OF THE NURSE AND WHAT SHE OWES TO IT.

LADIES: One of the prime factors of an address, if the speaker would hope to hold and entertain his audience, is the title; for if this fail to strike the fancy of his listeners, the subject-matter will seldom be appreciated. Fully realizing the importance of this step, I have revolved in my mind the numerous subjects that have been discussed before graduating classes and evolved one that, although it may not be new, will, nevertheless, I trust, be of interest to you. I have done this advisedly, because the average graduate nurse seems to conclude that her diploma guarantees to her success in her undertaking. With these few explanatory sentences, I now ask you to bear with me while discussing my theme, "The Diploma of the Nurse and What She Owes to It."

It has been the custom for ages for schools of learning to reward those completing a prescribed course of study with a certificate of proficiency. This certificate, or diploma, does not in any manner bind the authorities granting it, but simply guarantees to the public that its holder has faithfully fulfilled all the requirements of the institution. What the school really means by conferring the degree at a time called the Commencement, is that it assures a confiding public that its possessor is qualified to begin a professional career. In thus sending her

scholars from her domain, bearing the coveted diploma, she does not relinquish her right to recall it. Indeed, if she is convinced that one of her graduates is conducting himself in a manner to reflect discredit upon her good name, she promptly recalls his diploma and publishes the fact to the world.

The diploma of the nurse does not differ from that of any other school of learning. The same obligations go with it, and the conferring power can recall it for sufficient cause.

If, then, the school is willing to commission the nurse to go forth upon her commendable mission, it would seem but just that she, in turn, should model her life so as to prove herself worthy of the trust.

One of the surest means of accomplishing this result is by continuous study. Alas, too many nurses imagine that they have reaped a full harvest from the lecture field and require no further reference to books. It must be admitted that there are too many lawyers, clergymen and physicians that eke out an existence from a credulous people, without continuing the course mapped out for them by their collegiate training. Success with such men is evanescent, like the soap-bubble; for as long as their dupes blow them up they thrive, but when the blowing stops they vanish. Enduring eminence in any profession is only attained by constant application. The nurse may learn much from observation and experience, but if she desire to become successful she must frequently refer to books, and occasionally purchase the latest works on Hygiene and the Care of the Sick. Rules governing the treatment of disease are ever changing, so that she will soon become worthless unless she post herself about matters pertaining to the sick-room. She can gain much valuable knowledge by systematically reading periodicals and journals devoted to hygiene and dietetics.

The possessor of a retentive memory, although a fortunate person, should not always depend upon it. The nurse may be proud of hers, but she must not

trust it to retain the many happenings of the sick room. Let her methodically record everything of importance arising in the conduct of the case. As systematic methods are easily formed, uncertainties in the sick-room are inexcusable; so the nurse will be valued by the physician for her accurate notes and the readiness and ability with which she responds to his queries promptly and tersely.

There is one field in which there is still room for laborious study, although much has been accomplished in it through the instrumentality of hospital This field is the nursing of sick children, and it demands special study, profound thought, and systematic training from those who desire to plod it successfully. To the uneducated eye all are alike, and yet to the trained eye there is every shade of difference in the character of sick children. order that the nurse be successful she must note idiosyncrasies, calm fears, and depart from routine practice whenever occasion demands it. By this special training she will acquire the power of discernment and interpretation so as to anticipate the wants of the child and comprehend the mysteries of the aspect, posture, manner, and cry of the patient. The first object of the nurse is to master these, or she will toil in vain; and she must have at command a cheerful disposition, a gentle manner, an even temper, untiring patience, and self-control. She will have to learn to manage a pugnacious child as well as to acquire the tact of systematically feeding it. While preparing for the irritable and rebellious stomach, she must harden her heart to the pathetic entreaties for forbidden things, and never purchase obedience with promises not to be fulfilled, nor resort to deception to gain a point. If sympathetic, gentle, and truthful, she will win the child's confidence and love, and then it will be her submissive captive.

It not infrequently happens that the nurse assumes the role of an autocrat as soon as she enters the household. She takes possession of the family, the servants and the house, as well as the patient. As Dictator she finds so many things she is not employed to do that to discover her official duties is exceedingly difficult. The physician is frequently appealed to, and asked if trained nurses are to do this and not to do that-because her assumption of authority throws the family into such confusion that they are unable to decide the most trivial matters. the pretense of "following the orders of the physician" she antagonizes the family and robs them of their rights. She insists upon having exercise, food and rest, but rebels against manual labor, which is quite as valuable as these in the preservation of Her employers have to work and they expect her to do so. Making the bed, sweeping and cleaning articles in the sick-room will give healthful manual labor, and are not degrading.

There will be no such friction between the well trained nurse and the family. Modest in assuming charge of her patient, considerate in her dealings with the servants and appreciative of the rights, sympathies and unintentional interferences of the family, she will work harmoniously with the others without the dread of humiliation; follow the instructions of the physician without being aggressive; and lend a helping hand in household matters without sacrificing any of the rights, privileges and immunities, supposed to be guaranteed by the diploma.

A prejudice is engendered against the trained nurse by the acts of the uneducated, untrained and incompetent, the public being quicker to magnify the evils of bad nursing than to value the benefits of skilled. The greatest injury is that perpetrated by a class of women who parade before the world as trained nurses. They have probably received limited instruction in some hospital or have pretended to attend a course of lectures, and then, imagining

themselves as competent as those who have been systematically disciplined for three years, go forth, masquerading in a Swiss cap and blue and white striped gingham dress, as trained nurses, only to bring the system into contempt. The public accepts this regalia as a mark of distinction, seldom discriminating between the trained and the untrained in any other way, so that the educated nurse suffers for the misdoings of these decorated impostors. Lest my language be not properly intrepreted I disclaim any intention of reflecting upon those nurses who are compelled by hospital regulations to wear uniforms while being trained. I do refer to those self-constituted nurses who delude the public by regaling themselves in a costume designed for the graduate nurse, and who captivate the credulous by these fine feathers, which do not make fine birds.

At the inauguration of the Training School and the Directory for Nurses it was deemed wise and just to permit those possessing certain qualifications to register as nurses. Time enough has been allowed to these, so this practice should be discontinued, for it is an injustice to the educated nurse. Those now electing to follow nursing for a livelihood should be required to present a certificate of graduation from some legalized training school. This is the only way to rid the community of the various kinds of self-constituted nurses who bring skilled nursing into such disrepute.

If you would reflect credit upon your diploma avoid the extravagance with which you are so frequently charged. This is, perhaps, the result of hospital training. The labor-saving appliances of a hospital may unfit one for the substitutes to be secured in a private family. The thoughtful nurse will improvise and use such articles as are already there, instead of requesting the family to purchase expensive ones, which may afterwards prove as useless as the door-plate of the famous Mrs. Toodles,

who excused herself for having purchased it at an auction in this manner: "We," referring to Mr. Toodles and herself, "might have a daughter, who might marry a man by the name of Thompson, and then, my dear, the door-plate (spelling Thompson

with a p) will come in handy."

While a majority will agree that the care of the sick by the graduate nurse is vastly superior to that of the untutored, still it must be admitted that the system has not yet reached perfection. If we do grant that some of our graduates have not proved skilful we claim that a vast majority of them may justly be rated as excellent trained nurses. In the professions all men are not successful, therefore, let not the public condemn the system of training nurses because a few individuals fail.

Ladies, I now bid you Godspeed in your humane work, reminding you, as a parting admonition, that the nurse who talks little, promises little, keeps peace in the family and household matters out of the sick-chamber will reach the topmost round of the ladder first.







